

5.

London
Grave Yard





“‘And can you say that?’ rejoined Arnold; you who have brought discord and misery into the abode of peace?”

“‘With my life I would have purchased your happiness—yours and hers,’ replied the German, gravely, ‘could I have done it; but heaven, that is my witness, willed it otherwise.’”

“‘I believe it,’ said Arnold, touched in spite of himself by the tone of Paul and his manner of sincerity. ‘I believe it; you are but the instrument of others;’ and then turning to the wall and shaking his clenched fist, with bitterness he exclaimed, ‘Luther, Luther! it is you who must answer for this!’”

It would be foreign to our object to analyse the plot with a view of giving an idea of the further incidents of the tale; they may be left to the reader’s imagination, and as the above extract will suffice to show the nature of the work, we may here take our leave of a writer of whom her own countrymen are not a little proud, although her reputation has scarcely reached us across the channel.

The success of this novel may, perhaps, in part be attributed to the hereditary feud between Catholic and Protestant, which still exists in the Netherlands, and was indirectly, in 1830, the cause of the separation of Belgium from Holland. In England, the same old leaven continues to work, and perhaps to a much greater extent than in any part of the Continent. Protestant ascendancy is at the bottom of the Repeal agitation, and modern Catholicism, in the shape of Puseyism, distracts the bosom of Church. In the midst of the present widely-diffused excitement on religious subjects—a good translation of the last novel of Gertrude Toussaint would probably repay the publisher and be read with interest.

ART. IX.—*Report from the Select Committee on Improvement of the Health of Towns, together with the Minutes of Evidence, Appendix, and Index.*

(Ordered by the House of Commons to be printed, June 14, 1842.)

THE tyrants of antiquity were accustomed to despatch a criminal by binding the doomed wretch to a corpse: leaving the exhalations from the dead man to kill the living. While we shudder in contemplating this refinement in the philosophy of cruelty, we perhaps congratulate ourselves that in these days such things cannot be; but a little observation will convince us that the same ancient mode of extermination

still flourishes, and to an infinitely greater extent than in former times, though in a modified form. Our modern law, associated with religion, permits the continuous application, to thousands and hundreds of thousands of our population, of the same revolting principle of death which formerly was concentrated upon a few miserable individuals; and this, with the concurrence of parliament and the clergy, throughout all the towns and cities of the United Kingdom. Cathedrals, parish churches, church yards, burial yards, and all kinds of grounds, consecrated and unconsecrated, have been for centuries permitted to be used as receptacles of the dead, in the midst of our places of habitation, until at length earth and walls have become so saturated with putrefaction, that, turn where we may, the air we breathe is cadaverous, and a man often *feels* that sublimated particles, perhaps of his next door neighbour or nearest relative, enter his lungs at every respiration. Thus, in truth (though in a different sense from that of the Apostle), in the midst of life we are in death.

Setting aside the question of what must be the influence on the mind from a consideration of such sickening facts, the effect of this general state of atmospheric infection upon the public health must be evident. It is physically indubitable, and those upon whose senses the truth has not yet forced itself, may soon trace its course by physical demonstration. Many of our most popular diseases are referable to this source. Medical and scientific men have often denounced it, and given warning; but the impression upon society has been of a vague startling character, here and there giving rise to the formation of a suburban cemetery, which was, not unnaturally, recognised as a speculation, undertaken with the motives common to all joint-stock projects, rather than as an attempt to diminish or counteract an evil of which the shareholders had any serious alarms, notwithstanding all that their prospectuses might affirm on that head. While those who could comprehend the dreadful extent, and the actual and impending consequences of the system, have stated their view, local individuals who could understand, but would not act, have shaken their heads, and then dying, have been buried respectably, *more majorum*, perhaps under their own drawing-room windows.

It is strange that the practical people of Great Britain should be amongst the last to retain this disgraceful and dangerous relic of Christian barbarism. Burial in towns has been long forbidden in France. It is upwards of twenty years since the clergy of Spain concurred with the Cortes in abolishing the practice. In many parts of Italy, in Switzerland, Denmark,

Germany, and other nations of Europe, which we are apt to look upon as vastly behind ourselves in the march of intellect, burial in towns has been abolished by law. Why, then, does the system continue to prevail amongst us? Because, no doubt, the public mind has not been sufficiently aroused to a contemplation of its indecencies, horrors, and dangers; and there is no hope of suppressing this consecrated nuisance until a feeling of disgust, indignation, and resolution takes possession of all classes of society. This can only be produced by setting before their minds a picture, local and general, of their present dreadful position.

A few scientific men having impressed Parliament with the necessity of inquiring into the causes affecting the health of towns, a Committee was appointed, which commenced the investigation by taking evidence upon our burial system as a predominating evil. Their Report has since been presented to the House of Commons. The facts which have persuaded the Committee will doubtless influence the public. We esteem it, therefore, a duty, though not certainly a pleasing task, to submit a digest of the evidence, and so assist in hastening the general legislative movement that shall do away with one of the most disgraceful and perilous conditions of English society.

Since the Report was presented, we learn, from a conversation in the House, arising out of a question put to Sir James Graham by Lord Robert Grosvenor, that further evidence has been collected by Government on the subject, and that an additional report, embodying more carefully-considered suggestions than the former, is now lying in the office of the Home Secretary. If this be the fact, we would ask why the publication of the additional report is delayed? Sir James has declined supporting Mr Mackinnon's bill, founded upon the recommendations of the Committee: why should the public not be made acquainted with the recommendations which have influenced his judgment? It may be true that his mind is not yet wholly made up—that he cannot at present clearly see his way to a sound practical measure; but the greater, therefore, is the reason for making the new evidence and accompanying suggestions public, that the country at large might assist in the discussion. Waiting these (and it would seem, from the result of the present session, that on all questions of practical improvement we must be content to wait, possessing our souls in patience), we confine ourselves to an analysis of the report of Mr Mackinnon's Committee, the statements of which, as will be seen, are sufficiently startling to demand the most serious attention of every class in the community.

The first witness examined was Mr Henry Heldson, a collecting clerk to Mr James Bington Cooper, ironfounder, Drury lane. Mr Heldson has acted as assistant-minister of the Baptist persuasion at the City-road ground, called Bunhill fields, but chiefly at the New Bunhill fields, in the same district, the space being almost exhausted, in the former, by two hundred years' sepulture, and also rendered unpopular by increased fees.

"How were the graves generally made?—The plan on which the grave was opened was quite in accordance with that generally observed or adopted throughout London; that is, the opening, what is called a public grave, thirty feet deep, perhaps; the first corpse interred was succeeded by another, and up to sixteen or eighteen, and all the openings between the coffin boards were filled up with smaller coffins of children. When this grave was crammed as full as it could be, so that the topmost coffin was within two feet of the surface, that was banked up, and that piece of ground was considered as occupied.

"The largest number of burials I have ever attended on one day was during the raging epidemic called the influenza, I think, in 1837. On one Sunday afternoon I buried twenty-one persons myself; that was in Holywell Mount ground, situated about a quarter of a mile distant, in the Curtain road."

Sometimes this dead hole is left open a fortnight, or covered only with planks, before it is full;* it is then covered over with earth, to be opened again in rotation at the end of a year. Speaking of the 'sequel' in New Bunhill fields, Mr Heldson observes:—

"After the first year had passed away, for I officiated in that ground about four years during the heat of the summer, when those graves were re-opened on the Sunday afternoon, when most of the funerals take place, in consequence of their being chiefly among the Irish and the lower classes of society, by reason of their burying rather cheaper than at other grounds, they were exceedingly offensive; the swarms of some kind of black fly, which I am not able to explain the nature of, but I suppose generated in this house of corruption, were certainly so offensive, and the noisome stench arising from those deep graves was very unpleasant, so that it was difficult in the heat of the summer for any man of sensibility to discharge the duties necessarily devolving upon him.

"I have known a grave-digger obliged to be drawn out of those very deep graves after being in half an hour or three quarters of an hour, in consequence of his being overpowered with the heat and the stench accumulated there, and more particularly in opening those graves where ten or twelve corpses had already been interred; and where they began to run, the stench was dreadful. Every subsequent summer this offensive effluvia increased, and even the sight of the coffins; for the fact is, that as the coffins lie one on another in succession from the bottom to the top, the next grave that is opened alongside of that, to make the very most of every inch of the

* As far as the writer's observation goes, this is the official mode of burying paupers. Mr Wakley lately complained in the House of Commons, that having occasion to hold an inquest on the body of a pauper buried at Hanwell, on proceeding to exhume, the deceased was the fifteenth in downward succession. The effluvia arising from the removal of the overlying coffins was dreadful.

speculation of any proprietor of such ground; nay, I have been witness, from Sunday to Sunday, of my certain knowledge, of from sixteen to eighteen coffins being placed all in succession, rising one above another, and the horrible stench arising from those, and the swarms of flies and insects accumulated, it is horrible to conceive, and I have gone away sometimes so loathed and disgusted, as scarcely to be able to endure myself."

We are now in the very worst part of London. Mr John Irwin, house painter, says,—

"I live in Clement's lane, Clare market, overlooking Portugal-street burying-ground, belonging to the parish of Saint Clement Danes. Neither I nor any one of my family have been in good health since we came there, now three years since. The mortality of the neighbourhood has been very great; all the symptoms are generally those of typhus fever. I had a lodger of the name of Britt, a ruddy-complexioned man, who chose my house because it was a quiet place, but he became ill of fever almost immediately. His wife also caught it, as did Mr and Mrs Rosamond, who also lodged with me. Three out of the four went to the hospital; they all died. Rosamond died in the hospital, Britt in my house. Britt was buried within *ten feet of my wall*. The grave was opened, and a fortnight after there was another put atop of him; but previous to that the smell was so nauseous I could hardly contain myself; I was obliged to keep my window down. 'If this be the case,' said I to the grave digger, 'well may typhus fever rage in this neighbourhood. There is a *workhouse* on the right hand.'"

We now come to the worst. Mr Samuel Pitts, cabinet maker, residing at 14 Catherine street, Strand, says,—

"I used to attend as one of the Baptist congregation at Enon chapel, Clement's lane. The surface of the floor was fifty or sixty feet by forty. The cellar below was used as a burying place, the corpses having no covering but the coffins, and nothing separating the living congregation from the dead '*but the thin boards between the depositary and the chapel*, and there were openings between, owing to the shrinking of the boards.' The chapel and vault were owned by the late Rev. Mr Howse, who preached there. I attended from about 1828 for six or seven years. There have been on the whole about twelve thousand persons buried here; the depth is about six feet. I have heard, when it got too full, a great many have been removed to make way for others. I did hear, and it came through a woman who used to wash for Mrs Howse, living close by, *that they used to burn the coffins under the copper, and frequently in their own fireplace*. I do not know what became of the remains unless they were *shovelled all together*, which I believe to be the case. The fees were small, and were part of Mr Howse's emoluments. As many as nine or ten have been buried there one Sunday afternoon."—"While I attended the chapel," proceeds Mr Irwin, "the place was in a very filthy state; the smell was *abominable*, and very injurious; also there were some insects, something similar to a bug in shape and appearance, only with wings. I have seen in the summer hundreds of them flying about the chapel; I have taken them home in my hat, and my wife has taken them home in her clothes. We always considered that they proceeded from the dead bodies underneath."

Mr Howse must have been rather a powerful preacher to draw a congregation in such circumstances. He has now followed the majority of his congregation. There is no more

preaching there, and we believe the abomination of the burials below is given up through the interference of Sir James Graham. In the beginning of this year the chapel was converted into a Catholic school; but the facts were exposed in a petition to the House of Commons, and we believe the poor children are shown the way to the other world elsewhere.

"I believe," continues Mr Irwin, "the minister would not have had room for the twelve thousand bodies if he had not burned the coffins. The fee varied from 8s. to 15s., as the deceased was a child or an adult. I have frequently gone home from the chapel with a severe headache. It was a common thing to see some of the congregation removed in a fainting state. There was a sewer also running through the vault. I believe, when the wood of the coffins was taken away, the remains would in many cases fall into the sewer; but the commissioners compelled Mr Howse to build an arch over it."

Mr Moses Solomons, of Vinegar yard, Drury lane, gives us a clue to the plan which the proprietors adopted to keep room in that venerable, quiet-looking churchyard above-named. He says,—

"I have seen a grave digger take a coffin out, that coffin not being quite decayed, and take the body out; and he has taken the spade and *chopped the head from the body, so that he could take it out of the grave*. I have seen a great many coffins broken up; I suppose he puts them in the bone-house, and the bones too. My impression is, that the coffins were taken away to be burnt."

Mr Burn had also been employed to remove rubbish from St Mary's in the Strand, and St Clement's. "They are more careful of the bones, but there is the same smell." There is another Baptist burying chapel near Lincoln's inn fields, behind Little Wild street, where the interments are more decent, but the smell is so bad that the people cannot bear it in the summer time.

The grave-diggers of London are a wonderful though little-known class of men; and see things dreadful and strange. To form a correct idea of them they must be allowed to describe themselves. John Eyles, a grave-digger in "that spot in Portugal street," is examined as follows:—

"What is the shallowest depth at which you have known a coffin placed?—Since I have been there they have had a tremendous deal of ground brought in when the college was being built, and they took it from one part of the ground and put it on another. There was a pauper buried out of the house which I remember quite well; nobody followed it; it was buried out of the bone house, what they call the dead house, and it was put down where the carpet ground was, and I believe, if the earth was at the same height then that it is now, it would be under a foot, but I will say a foot; I would rather say more than less.

"Have you ever, in passing over there, smelt any offensive smell?—I cannot say that I have ever noticed it particularly, but there must be a smell, because neither lead nor wood will keep the stench of the body in;

it will fly out of lead as well as out of wood; a great many coffins are now made of mill lead.

"Has it affected you in health?—It has a great deal; I nearly at one time lost my life through it.

"How did it affect you?—When I went down the grave I went down a little way, and it smelt as if it was brimstone or some sulphury stuff, and when I reached the bottom my sensation was taken away altogether, and I could hardly make my way up to the top; and when I got to the top I dropped on the boards, and then I went home and got some shavings and an old bed tick, and burnt it down the grave to get the foul air out.

"How were you affected; did it make you vomit?—It did a great deal; it was a trembling sensation over me, and a nasty coppery taste in my mouth.

"Did you lose your appetite?—I did not lose my appetite, but in the afternoon I was again taken at the same grave; I went down in the afternoon; a child was buried, and the webbing that checked the coffin had turned the coffin over, and it was my duty to unfasten the webbing. When I reached the bottom I could not make anybody hear, and I grasped hold of the webbing, and they pulled me up; and when I got out of the grave I walked to the side of the church, and there I lay for half an hour.

"What church was it?—St Clement Danes, in the Strand.

"Have you seen coffins cut through?—If you have orders for it you are compelled to do it; if you are to dig a grave in a certain place, it is your duty to do it, and if not you are told directly, 'I will get somebody else to do it.'

"Then you have cut through coffins?—I have.

"Have you ever cut up the lead of a coffin?—Yes, I have once.

"By orders?—By orders.

"What became of the lead?—I do not know; it was not in my time; I went away soon after I cut it up.

"What did you do with the lead when it was cut?—I left it there.

"What burial ground was that?—In St Clement's church.

"Is it a matter of common occurrence to do so?—I do not know; but if I must speak my mind, I think there is a tremendous deal of lead taken away, both in the churchyard and in the vaults; but I think it is a common thing for the old original coffins to be taken and chopped up; and I think it to be nothing else but the duty of any gentleman that has got any authority, to go into every church vault, and to have the books brought forward to prove how many coffins there ought to be, and to make them account for how many coffins are missing. The lead I believe is a hundred and a half or two hundred in each coffin; I should say there were about two hundred and a half, and it would fetch 1½d. a pound.

"What quantity of wood have you seen taken away, or do you know has been taken away from this churchyard? How many wheelbarrows full in a week?—I could not say, sometimes more, sometimes less, sometimes none; it all depends upon the work; sometimes we get as much out of one grave as you may out of six or seven others; sometimes you may have a bag full in a week.

"What do you mean by a 'grave,' what depth do you mean?—Five feet is the common depth for a grown person, and three feet for a child, when it is five feet that leaves four feet from the surface of the earth, but I do not think four feet is enough to keep the effluvia out.

"You think the gas gets out of the ground at that distance?—I am sure it does, because the gas will penetrate through anything; it will penetrate through the strongest man; if he happen to hold his head over the

place where the gas is flying it will make him ill ; and I think that people going by at the time when a grave is open must breathe some of the gas, as well as persons working in the grave, for when the gas is out you can smell it quite strong up above.

"How far from the grave will the smell of the gas extend?—It depends upon the wind.

"Supposing the wind is blowing towards you, how far will it take it?—If the corpse is about five or six feet below the ground you may smell it six or seven yards from you, but you do not smell it if you are standing by the side and continually in it.

"The vaults in St Clement Danes are close to the street?—Yes, the gas escapes from the vaults into the church through a grating cullett, and many persons who go to the church on Sunday, when they come home are taken ill and are dead soon afterwards, through the gas in the church ; I do not think the lead is of any use to keep the gas in.

"You would not like to go to a leaden coffin and tap it?—Yes, I should not object to it ; if you keep underneath the coffin, you would not have so much of the gas then ; if you keep underneath, the gas flies up ; if you tap it underneath, if there is any dead water, or any 'soup,' as it is called, it runs into a pail, and then it is taken and thrown into some place or another, perhaps down a gullyhole. I have been, before now, compelled to put my clothes out of the window, because the stench has been so great that they could not bear the place.

"Has it ever occurred to you to go into a public house, and to find the smell of your clothes offensive to people there?—Yes, many a time ; when I have been doing rather dirty work, when I have come in, I have noticed the people smell and get away on the other side of the place ; there is sure to be plenty of room when we come in ; they are sure to say, 'These chaps have been emptying some cesspool.'

"Is the smell of these graves more offensive than that of a common cesspool?—I emptied a cesspool, and the smell of it was rose water compared with the smell of these graves.

"Has it ever happened, to your knowledge, that the men have declined digging through the coffins, and that they have been induced to do so by the sexton?—Yes ; that is the word : 'If you do not like to do it, I will get somebody else.'

"You, or some of the men, have felt a repugnance to cutting through coffins?—It is not a pleasant thing to chop away when it is not fit to chop away ; when the body is decayed it does not matter taking that away.

"And you have found yourself, and other workmen with you, obliged to cut through, whether you liked it or not?—If you are paid for doing it you must do it, whether you like it or no ; if you do not like it you must go.

"Is your father interred there?—Yes, he is : I did not want him to be buried there.

"Did anything occur to his remains?—I saw them chopping the head of his coffin away ; I should not have known it if I had not seen the head with the teeth ; I knew him by his teeth ; one tooth was knocked out and the other was splintered ; I knew it was my father's head, and I told them to stop, and they laughed ; and I would not let them go any further, and they had to cover it over. It is time that something was done to stop it ; and there is a slaughter-house close by, in St Clement's lane, which is enough to breed any fever."

"Have you ever hesitated, when ordered to dig a grave, in cutting down through coffins?—Yes ; I have said, 'There is not room to put down ;' but it is said, 'You must make room :' but the sexton will not stop over the grave while that is being done ; our sexton I know is fonder of pastry

than standing over the top of a grave; he goes and has a shilling's worth of pastry while it is being done.

"Then, when the sexton orders you to dig a grave, he goes away himself?—Yes, and leaves you to do the rest.

"Do you know anything of the burial-ground under the windows of the almshouse in St Clement Danes?—I know that the bodies ought to be removed from there; it is not fit for anybody to live in the adjoining houses; I could go there and take a carving knife, and almost take some of the lids off. They are in a deal box half-an-inch thick; there is a great heap, and if that heap was taken away within nine inches from the top of the earth, you would have to take half of the sides of some of the coffins away.

"Do you know anything about the health of the people in the neighbourhood?—Some are ill; some are better than others. I do not know how the people in the almshouses feel. If it was a hot summer you would see the ground smoke, the same as if there was boiling water put over it.

"Have you seen that yourself?—I have not noticed it particularly myself, but I know those that have, and if you take the ground up in your hands it is the same as taking ink into your hands.

"The ground is so saturated with the remains of dead bodies?—Yes, it is.

"Is this in Portugal street?—No, it is in St Clement Danes: it is what they call the pauper ground, where the people that are buried by the workhouse are put.

"Have you ever observed anything of the same kind in the burial-ground in Portugal street?—Yes, I have seen the ground smoke and reek on a summer's morning; about five o'clock you will see it smoke the same as if there had been hot water poured down.

"Is a grave ever left open at night?—If you are going to dig a deep grave, you cannot do it all in one day; perhaps you may be four or five days over it, and then it is left open: sometimes we put a tarpauling over it.

"Then the smell must come up?—It does."

Michael Pye, a brother-practitioner, being asked whether his health was ever affected by his trade, answers—

"I have. I have been taken with sickness and spitting, and with a nasty taste in my mouth. In one grave in particular I struck a coffin accidentally with a pickaxe. As soon as I struck it it came out the same as a froth from a barrel of beer and threw me backwards, and I was obliged to stand some minutes before I could recover."

Speaking of the doings at St Clement Danes' church, he says—

"To my knowledge the coffins are cut up in the vaults and removed. In one case that I can speak to, the sexton, Mr Fitch, told me to select two coffins out, which I brought him out into the middle of the vault; and after they were brought out there another man was sent for and I was sent out of the way. I suppose that I was not trusted to perform this duty; another man cut them up. But I thought it a curious thing that I should be sent away, being the regular man there at the time, and I crossed over to the Fore-gate, that is, the pillars opposite the church, and I stood there some considerable time, and about five o'clock in the afternoon I saw a stonemason's truck come down Clement's lane and go inside the church, and the lead was loaded on the truck, and two men drew the lead away of those two coffins that I had selected out, and some lots of lead and copper remaining in a large chest at the bottom of the vault went away

at the same time on the truck. They went down Fleet street, through Temple bar.

"*Mr Vernon.* When the lead was taken away, do you know what became of the wooden coffins and the bodies?—The remains were put into a basket, and next morning there was a hole dug on the south side of the churchyard, and the body was put down there without anything on it.

"*Chairman.* Is it the common practice to break up the wooden coffins?—Yes, it is the common practice of late; because the ground has been so full, that in fact you cannot get a grave without doing it.

"If you come to a coffin lately put in, how do you cut through it?—If we come to one that is very fresh we can tell by a searcher; but frequently we come to one that feels very soft with the searcher, but when we get on it the coffin is full, and then we are compelled to cut through it to make way for the coffin that is coming.

"What do you do with the remains?—The remains are put down at the bottom of the grave, and the coffin that is coming is put on it.

"The remains are put at the bottom without any coffin?—Yes; there is just a small piece of ground put over it to hide it.

Bartholomew Lyons, grave-digger of St Anne's, Soho.

"How do you manage, when you descend one of these deep graves, to avoid what you have stated affects you so much?—First we put down a long ladder, twenty feet six inches long, and I go down first myself; I go down as far as I can to see if I feel anything of the effect of the foul air; and if I go down and feel it coming, and I have got a funeral to bury, I burn it out, so that I can go down.

"What do you mean by burning it out?—We have got something similar to a plumber's stove, what the plumbers have in the street, and I make that full of shavings and wood, and make a strong fire, and gradually lower it down into the grave by degrees till the foul air catches hold. The foul air, when it is strong, will put it out, and I pull it up again till I get it a-light again, and so I go on till I get it under, and when I get it under, I chuck a lot of shavings in and set fire to it, and there let it burn till it burns out, and then I go down myself and get the earth out as quick as possible.

"Do you usually find this gas and foul air coming to you from other coffins on each side of you?—At times, very soon after I have burnt it out, I shall have to burn it out again.

"And if you were to stay there, what would be the effect?—It would kill me, or any one else."

Here is an incident that equals anything in Euripides.

"In digging this depth and taking away the wood of these coffins, has it ever occurred to you that any bodies have fallen upon you?—I never had one in a deep grave, but I had one once; before I was there a man of the name of Fox had the ground; I succeeded him; he is now dead; he was a bad character; he is dead about three weeks. I dug a grave on a Sunday evening on purpose to get ready for the Monday; that Sunday evening, and it rained, I was strange in the ground at that time; and when I went to work on Monday morning I finished my work, and I was trying the length of the grave to see if it was long enough and wide enough, so that I should not have to go down again, and while I was in there the ground gave way and a body turned right over, and the two arms came and clasped me round the neck; she had gloves on and stockings and white flannel inside, and what we call a shift, but no head.

"The body came tumbling upon you?—Yes, just as I was kneeling down; it was a very stout body, and the force that she came with knocked my head against a body underneath, and I was very much frightened at the time.

"You were at the bottom of the grave, and as you were digging at the bottom, the body of this woman without a head fell upon you?—Yes.

"From the side?—Yes, from the side.

"Out of the coffin?—It had never been in a coffin; it is supposed that they took the head off for the purpose of sale.

"How long had this body been interred?—Not long; because the clothes upon her appeared to be quite fresh.

"Do you believe that the lead of the coffins has been taken away?—I cannot say anything as to myself, as I never did anything of the sort myself; but the man that is dead has done most wonderful things in the vaults; he stripped the lead off the coffins in the vaults; he has been the biggest brute of any grave-digger in this earth, and he suffered for it at last; he died in the Strand Union Workhouse at last; he died actually rotten.

"What salary do you get?—Eighteen shillings a-week, and then of course there is a little what we call pickings-up, perquisites; may be 10s. a-week.

"Still you would give up the situation if you could get anything else?—If I could get anything with half the money; my wife has been making home-baked bread, and we now find that we have got enough, so that by persevering a little we shall be able to get our living, so that I am about to leave in a fortnight or so."

Mr George Whittaker, an intelligent undertaker, confirms much of the foregoing evidence generally. He says all the churchyards in the metropolis are in a very dreadful state, and that the gas which issues from a coffin is of the most deadly quality, while it is so powerful that it will raise all the lids of a treble coffin and burst them.

"I once," says he, "after many attempts, got some gas from a coffin in the vaults of St Clement Danes. I bored a hole through the lid of a coffin; I then held an India rubber bottle to the hole until it was quite full. This was from a coffin buried eight years. I tried some time after again, and I was nearly killed."

The gas that Whittaker obtained he took to Mr Walker, a neighbouring surgeon, who had requested him to procure it; but Mr Walker states that he was obliged, in consequence of the intolerable stench, to pass it through water, instead of through mercury, not having his process ready; he therefore lost a great deal of it, but it made its way through the house in two minutes, and actually forced some relatives who were in one of the highest floors to run out of doors. This gas differs from ordinary gases, there being animal matter suspended in it. The first bubble that passed through the water left a greasy pellicle on the surface; Mr Walker was very glad to get rid of it, but it made him so ill that he kept his bed for a week afterwards. The gas generates as soon as decomposition takes

place, and it will retain its virulence for a thousand years if confined; but no covering of earth, wood, iron, stone, or lead is a security against it.

So much for the details of churchyards and grave-digging in London. It is not too much to infer from this, that the practice of all resemble those which we have already described. Mr Walker, a medical practitioner in Drury lane, affirms that the emanations are poisonous to those living in the neighbourhood of the metropolitan churchyards.

"Most of those I am about to name I have personally examined; they are, the burying-ground in Portugal street; Enon chapel, Clement's lane; St Clement's church, Strand; and the vaults of *St Martin's in the fields*; Drury lane; Russell court, Drury lane; St Paul's, Covent garden; St Giles's burying-ground; Aldgate churchyard; Whitechapel church and vaults; St Mary's Catholic chapel, Moorfields; Spitalfields ground; Bethnal-green old ground; Stepney burial-ground; Mulberry chapel, St George's in the East, Ellinore Swedish Protestant church; St George's church, Cannon street East; Ebenezer chapel, Ratcliff highway; Sheen's ground; Shadwell churchyard and vaults; Trinity Episcopal chapel, Cannon-street road; the Mariners' church, Welleclose square; Bunhill fields, City road; St Luke's, Old street; Clerkenwell church, four burial-grounds and vaults; Spa fields; St James's burying-ground, Clerkenwell; St Ann's, Soho; Elin chapel, Fetter lane; St Saviour's church, Southwark; the Cross Bones, belonging to the same parish; All Saints, Poplar; St Andrew's, Holborn; St Anne's, Linchouse; Bermondsey; Christchurch, Surrey; *St George's, Hanover square*; *St George's, Middleser*; *St George's, Southwark*; *St James's, Westminster*; St John's, Hackney; *St John's, Westminster*; St Leonard, Shoreditch; *St Luke's, Chelsea*; *St Margaret's, Westminster*; *Kensington*; Islington; Lambeth; Newington; Rotherhithe; Paddington; *Pancras*; and many others."

"*Mr Denton.* Will you state whether you have seen disease arising from that cause?—I have; but it is sufficient to state that the neighbourhood to which my attention has been especially directed is surrounded with graveyards; and that there are hundreds of tons weight of human bodies resting temporarily in the earth until displaced to make room for a succeeding tenant. Bodies, in many situations, are placed within six inches of the surface. Martin's ground, in the Borough, measures two hundred and ninety-five feet in width and three hundred and seventy-nine in length. If we multiply these together, we shall make 111,805 superficial feet. If we allow twenty-seven feet for the burial of an adult body, and divide this (the product) by that number, we shall obtain a quotient of 4,140 and a fraction. The vault is one hundred-and-eighteen feet long and forty-one feet wide. If we take the main width of a coffin, or the space it will occupy, I think, speaking of adults, we shall be able to place on the surface four hundred-and-three bodies. According to the best information I can obtain from a man that has worked there ten years, it appears that 14,000 dead bodies have been deposited in this ground and vaults during the time he has been there.

"Can you say whether, in your immediate neighbourhood, there is any disease traceable to this cause?—Yes; and I shall prove, by a very intelligent witness, that he has known persons affected by this cause. They prepare graves in many graveyards in London for ten or twelve funerals on a Sunday, the day on which funerals mostly take place; there is the most

unseemly haste during the time of the burying; I have seen a clergyman go hastily from one to another, reading the service at each; a number of mourners come depressed with grief; their power of resistance is weakened; they may not have eaten for some time previously; they breathe the gases given off, and have been seen to stagger both in the vaults and on the edge of the grave, and in many instances have, within a week, been deposited in the grave themselves.

"You have mentioned the circumstance of burials taking place only six inches from the surface; from what cause is that; is it to save trouble?—It is frequently done to save trouble; but in many instances they cannot go lower. There is an utter disregard of consequences; and I know the working clergy are so careful not to breathe this air, that a direction has been given to the sexton to place the box at a considerable distance from the grave, so as to avoid it.

"*Chairman.* You have mentioned two sorts of gases, one sinking to the bottom, and the other rising up, and you stated that you considered that there was some animal matter floating in the gas?—In the compound mixture I have no doubt there is.

"How do you distinguish the two gases?—There are several gases intermixed with an oleaginous compound; and I am quite certain there is an animal matter floating in that mixture; having passed a quantity of this through water, on one occasion, a pellicle arose; there is no doubt a very large portion of animal matter is present in a suspended form.

"You form your conclusion from the greasy sort of matter found in the water?—Yes; the gas will be absorbed, to a certain degree, by the water, and this fatty matter will be found on the surface.

"What is it that sinks to the bottom?—The carbonic acid and other gas; these are the gases which destroyed the men in Aldgate churchyard in 1838. If the man had been on his guard, and held his breath during the time he endeavoured to render assistance, I do not think he would have died; but he unfortunately leant over the body of the dead man, inspired the gas, and fell down lifeless."

Mr Walker, who has devoted a meritorious attention to this subject, repeats, in a variety of forms, his conviction that the burial of the dead in every one of these places is injurious to the living. We have underlined some passages for the purpose of impressing on the aristocracy, who in the parts referred to have their own world, that they are just as much in danger as the poor man in Limehouse; the vaults and yards in all the fashionable churches, whether for marriage or prayer, being crowded often to within six inches of the surface.

It is as bad as anywhere else next door to the Queen, Lords, and Commons in Parliament assembled, as appears from the following extract from the '*Lancet*' for June 13th, 1840:—

"William Green, a grave digger, while employed in his vocation in the churchyard of St Margaret, Westminster, was suddenly seized with faintness, excessive chilliness, giddiness, and inability to move his limbs. He was seen to fall, removed home, and his usual medical attendant was sent for. The poor fellow's impression was that 'he should never leave his bed alive; he was struck with death.' He was subsequently removed to the hospital, where he died in a few days. No hope was entertained, from the first, of his recovery. Mr B., the medical attendant, was seized with

precisely the same symptoms. He was attended by me. I apprehended, from the first, a fatal result; he died four days after the decease of the grave digger. The fatal effects of this miasm did not end here; the *servant was seized* on the day after the death of her master, and she sank in a few days. There can be no doubt *that the effluvia from the grave* was the cause of the death of these three individuals. The total inefficiency, in the three cases, of all remedial means showed the great power of the virus, or miasm, over the animal economy from the commencement of the attack. —(Signed) J. C. ATKINSON, surgeon, Romney terrace, Westminster."

Let it be remembered that if this cadaverous gas comes into undiluted contact with the lungs of a man for an instant, his life is in the most imminent danger, and his health may be destroyed for ever. No length of time can be a warrant that a coffin does not contain this gas. Mr Walker states that a short time ago a portion of the old graveyard of St Clement's in the Strand, was dug up to make a sewer, which was much needed in that neighbourhood. One of the men employed struck his pickaxe into a coffin; the body it contained had been buried in the year 1789; the gas was clearly perceptible—it issued from the coffin like the steam from a teapot spout, and the stench was insufferable.

When the republicans of Paris were plundering and devastating the vaults of the Kings of France, in the church of Saint Deny, a gas issued from the coffin of Francis I, the contemporary of our Henry VIII, of so dreadful a nature that it nearly killed the depredators; nor would they venture near the Royal corpse again for some days.

"It has been vainly thought," says Dr Farran, of Dublin, in a letter to the Chairman, "that when the body has been committed to the tomb all disease will moulder with it. We have many instances to prove the contrary to be the case: even when it has lain for years, and returned to its kindred dust, on being disturbed and exposed to the air, the disease springs up, renovated as it were by the rest it enjoyed in the grave, to recommence its havoc. We have the example which Eyam affords; in this place the plague broke out afresh from the inadvertent opening of a grave, after a repose of ninety-one years, and cut off to the extent of four-fifths of the inhabitants of a populous town."

It will be observed by some that this gas, especially carbonic acid, though undoubtedly mortal in its undiluted state, is still heavy and sluggish, and keeps about the graveyards. This certainly is its tendency; but the grave diggers will not let it alone—they force it into circulation.

The Chairman of the Committee asks—

"Is it only that gas which evaporates in air which you consider to be noxious to the population?"

Mr Walker answers—

"Undoubtedly the heavy gases also become diffused, are mixed with the atmosphere, and breathed by the dwellers in the locality, or those passing

by. In very many graveyards they are obliged, when they dig deep graves (and in most instances they are compelled to do this), to throw down lighted straw, or paper, or shavings, or water, to absorb the gases before they descend. Thus these gases are rarefied, driven up, and diffused in the atmosphere, and the next current of air may pass them into the street or into a house. There are many places I am acquainted with in the vicinity of a graveyard where they cannot keep their windows open in warm weather. I consider this a source of illness in the metropolis."

We have now taken a pretty fair survey of the burial-grounds of the metropolis. We have omitted the names of several ; but it is enough to repeat that the condition of them all is horrible, atrocious to the dead and dangerous to the living. Colonel Acton, Mr Ainsworth, and Colonel Fox, members of the Committee, visited Enon chapel and some of the burial-grounds about Lincoln's inn fields, in company with Dr Walker, after his first testimony, and from what they saw, but still more from what they felt was *concealed* from them, they assured their honourable colleagues that they might rely on his testimony as not at all exaggerated. The specific amount of injury done by this state of things to the health of the population cannot, of course, be precisely stated ; but the general opinions of Dr Walker, who seems to have more practically investigated this question than any of his contemporaries, are confirmed by the testimony of other eminent authorities.

Sir James Fellowes, who was physician to the army in the peninsula in 1804, says, that

"Even the bigoted people of Spain were convinced, by the fever that devastated their chief cities about that time, that the burial of the dead amidst their towns always killed more or less of the living, and that since 1810 the practice has been suppressed by the Government."

Sir William Clay then observes—

"You are clearly of opinion that even in this climate the effluvia arising from decomposition of dead bodies might become a generating cause of pestilence?"

The answer of Sir James is—

"That is my opinion, and it always has been so. When I returned from Spain I saw some account of the fever in Andalusia, and I mentioned my opinion of the extreme danger of burying in towns, and that it was high time that we should give up that system in our country.

"*Chairman.* It is your conviction generally that the decomposition of corpses is capable of generating disease in the human frame, which disease may in its turn become an epidemic?—Sir James: Yes, it might be so, from the extrication of gases; that was the opinion in Spain."

It would appear, from Sir James's testimony, that his representations in 1804 had a considerable effect in urging the Spanish Government to the enlightened resolution it adopted ; for, though we were at war with Spain then, he had a passport

from General Castanos to go where he pleased ; the authorities gave him all facilities ; they then adopted the determination to suppress burial in towns, and he was present in 1810 when it was confirmed by the Cortes.

Dr George Frederick Collier, of Spring gardens, says—

“My impression is that the interment of persons within large towns must be one cause, *inter alias*, of fevers. I believe that no single cause produces fever, but that the effluvia given off from the human body tends to depress, impair, and enervate the human frame ; and I look to this as one cause, *inter alias*, of fevers ; for my experience of twenty-three or twenty-four years tells me it is so.”

He adds, that the greatest care will not render vaults harmless ; —that even in the case of royal funerals in this country, it seldom happens, where parties descend too curiously into the tomb, but that some person or other is affected with cold or fever ; but other causes are co-operating in addition to the effluvia of the vault.

Mr G. D. Lane, surgeon, of Wilson street, Drury lane, having given an account of a case thus caused, which he had cured with great difficulty, then relates us the following little professional incident :—

“I was at the burial of a friend about six weeks ago in St Giles’s churchyard ; the corpse was not in the ground more than three feet down ; the clergyman who officiated was a sensible man ; he was as far off as that window, so that there being a little wind up you could not well hear him, and he got partly under the lee of the church ; but there was a very strong effluvia from the grave ; I tasted it ; and when I saw him keeping so far off that I could scarcely hear him, I thought he was a sensible man,* but out of respect to my friend I stood near it and bore it ; I would not leave my post out of respect to the deceased, but if I could have been alongside the clergyman I should have been glad of it.”

Dr Copeland, Censor of the Royal College of Physicians, states, that

“Burying in large towns affects the health of individuals, in the first place by emanations into the atmosphere, and in the second place by poisoning the water percolating through the soil.”

How many pumps are there standing right under the churchyard walls, as in the case of Aldgate pump, Shoe-lane pump, St Bride’s pump, the pump in the pavement around St Martin’s in the fields—not to talk of other fountains—the streams of which we may imagine rippling their dark course amongst bones and coffins, and oozing through the ribs perhaps

* A week before this, however, the Rev. J. E. Tyler, the rector of St Giles’s-in-the-fields, assures the Committee that “we have never, in any one instance, found any effluvia from the churchyard. On the contrary, it is a decidedly healthy spot.”

of the late churchwardens and the highly respectable chairman of the vestry !

If you quench your thirst in the river Hoogly, into which the dead Hindoos are thrown, you may swallow a dysentery or a putrid fever.

Dr Lynch supports Dr Copeland. Sir Benjamin Brodie informs the Committee that he has always considered the crowded state of the churchyards as one cause of fever or disease.

It must be admitted that exceptions are taken to the emphasis of some of the foregoing testimony. For example, Dr R. B. Todd, of King's-college hospital, which adjoins the burial-ground in Portugal street, of which we have often spoken, declares to the Committee that "no inconvenience whatever" has been felt in the hospital from the contiguity of the graveyard. The danger is more than compensated by the ventilation afforded by the space, and the patients, officers, and pupils, have been, he adds, remarkably free from fever.

The Lord Bishop of London, while entertaining a very strong opinion of the necessity which has long existed for some change in the present system of interment in towns, especially the metropolis, observes—

"I still must think that the actual evils which have resulted from it have been considerably exaggerated."

This is not unlikely: when we cannot measure the exact amount of an evil it is as natural that we should overstate as understate it; but a bishop can know but little personally of the horrid details which are the work of the second and third grave diggers, whenever the sexton who orders them "to make a grave" and "to cut through" turns his back upon the operation, and goes to eat pastry. However, his lordship is decidedly anxious that an end should be put to the system. Whilst the Bishop assures us that he never perceived any bad smell while residing in the churchyard of St Botolph, Bishops-gate, as rector, the Rev. Dr Knapp, vicar of Willesden, who had been twenty-seven years curate of St Andrew's Undershaft, in the city, declares that the "abominable exhalations" at length ejected him out of the rectory house, and finally from the living, which was worth 200*l.* a year, to a very inferior one.

In all the private burial-grounds something in the shape of a burial-service is read over the corpses. The proprietor is generally an undertaker, the "minister" some low tradesman who lives close by, and receives a yearly allowance from his master. When the poor see this man approach with his surplice, they never think of inquiring by whom he was ordained, and per

haps, at the only time when the words of an educated pious clergyman would make a good impression, they are disgusted or hardened by the demeanour of this sham parson—perhaps even his “pernunciation” sends the mourners laughing to the public house. In a private ground in Globe fields, Mile end, belonging to a brute named Tagg, where the dead are soon dug up and crammed piecemeal into pits, the coffins being burnt in order to make room for more, we have a “chaplain” of this sort, a shoemaker of the name of Cauch. Hoole and Martin have another “clergyman” to go through the service at their horrid place in the Borough. Haycock, the grave digger, says his name is Mr Thomas Jenner. He is a dissenter and a patten-maker; he lives close by, and gets 20% a year. “So it suits him very well.” The fees are 11s. for a grown person, 8s. for a child. In all these places the fees are low “to suit the poor.”

But we have already overloaded our pages with evidence of the condition of the metropolis, allowing every possible deduction for the influence which bad ventilation, dirty and crowded houses, lanes, streets, and alleys, obstructed sewers, uncleansed privies, bad feeding, and filthy personal habits must have upon the health of the inhabitants, if there were not a corpse buried within ten miles of London.

Let us take a glance at the “state of the country.” Excepting Liverpool and Glasgow, where the evil has been mitigated to some extent by the opening of well-managed cemeteries a little way out of town, the system seems to cry aloud for a remedy as well as in the metropolis. In Liverpool they have an excellent cemetery, but every one is not buried there; and in some of the other churchyards they persist in the evil practice of accumulating a pile of coffins in the same pit. Even in Glasgow, Dr Bowring says, “It occurred to me, some time ago, to see *corpses absolutely visible* on the surface of the churchyard!”

CARLOW.—Dr Shewbridge Connor states, that

“The churchyard in Carlow is in the centre of the town, and so closely surrounded by tenements, that in some places the wall of the dwelling house, often loosely built, alone divides the bed of the occupant from the perhaps newly-tenanted grave.”

OXFORD.—Alderman Sadler states—

“Eight out of our twelve churchyards are inconveniently filled; and in 1837, when I was called to the office of chief magistrate, I convened several meetings of the local clergy and parish officers, to endeavour to establish a cemetery near the city; but petty jealousies prevailed, and the subject dropped.”

Dr Randall adds, that

“In some cases decency has been outraged by the revolting exposure

of the remains of the dead ere yet the grave has fully done its task, as well as by the laying open to view the circumjacent coffins in digging fresh receptacles for the corpses of the parishioners."

CAMBRIDGE.—Mr Fisher, the mayor, states, that in most of the churchyards there is no unoccupied space, yet more bodies are rammed into the ground every day. Dr Hairland confirms this, adding—

"The state of the burying-grounds in this town is most offensive, demoralising, and injurious to the health of the inhabitants."

DUBLIN.—Dr Fitzpatrick writes a letter to the Chairman, too brief and interesting to be abridged :—

"Park street, Dublin, 25th April, 1842.

"Sir,—As in an investigation such as you are prosecuting every authentic fact bears some value, I beg to bring under the notice of the committee the following circumstances demonstrative of the abominations consequent on the frequent re-opening of graves. In 1835 I attended the funeral of a lady to St Bride's churchyard, in this city : on arriving there I was surprised to see a coffin on the ground tied with ropes, and in so shattered a condition as to permit a partial view of the body which it contained. On making inquiry, I ascertained from one of the attendants, that owing to the crowded state of the churchyard, it was necessary to lift up this coffin in order to make room for that of the lady, and while they were removing it to a short distance it broke asunder, and the body, in an advanced state of putrefaction, fell to the earth, creating so disgusting an effluvia as obliged the grave diggers to retire to a distance. On the occasion alluded to, a gentleman and I recognised the head of a friend who had been interred in the same grave two years previously ; the muscles and the lower jaw were removed, but the scalp being perfect, the peculiarity of the hair and the formation of the skull satisfied us of its identity. Thus, sir, independent of the question as to the influence of noxious emanations from decomposed bodies on the already loaded atmosphere of cities and large towns, some of the best feelings of human nature are outraged by such profanation of the grave, and by the indignities offered to the remains of those who during life were esteemed and loved. Every man of well-regulated mind must wish for the prevention of such abuses, and this object can only be attained by the establishment of extensive cemeteries, thereby removing the necessity of re-opening graves, until at least such changes were effected as would prevent identification of the body, or the production of noxious effluvia.

I have, &c.

"THOMAS FITZPATRICK, M. D.

CARLISLE.—A letter from Mr Mounsey, the mayor, contains the following paragraph :—

"In Carlisle there were, until within a very few years past, only two burial-grounds, the crowded state of which frequently caused most revolting exposures, and in hot weather very disagreeable effects. Two small additional burying-grounds were provided, eight or ten years since, in the suburbs ; but they are filling very rapidly, and the town extending around them."

SOUTHAMPTON.—Mr Dickson, the mayor, describes the general burying-ground in St Mary's parish as in a very crowded

and disgraceful state. The Town Council has offered a gift of twenty-two acres for a cemetery, "but the Radicals in vestry assembled refused this boon." The worthy mayor gives no opinion as to these Radicals, but we have no hesitation in saying that they ought to be buried alive.

LEEDS.—This place is in a dreadful state. Mr Robert Baker, surgeon, being examined before the Committee, speaks generally of the ground as being extraordinarily full. The parochial ground, consisting of three distinct pieces, has been filled and refilled, diffusing fever around. The burial-places are surrounded by inhabitants.

"I was in the ground last Wednesday collecting information, and the sexton took me to a grave which they were then digging for the interment of a female; two feet below the surface they took out the body of a child which was said to be an illegitimate child, and it had been buried five years; below that, and two feet six inches from the surface, were two coffins side by side, the father and the brother of the person who was then going to have the interment; the father was buried in 1831; the coffins were opened, the bones were in a state of freshness; the matter had been putrified off the bones, but they were perfectly fresh; they were thrown on the surface, and at that time the person came in who was going to have the interment; he spoke to me about it, and made use of this expression, 'Look! these are the skulls of my father and my brother, and the bones of my relations, is not this a bad business? It cannot, I suppose, however, be helped; I must have a family grave.' He was very much shocked; he stayed a short time, and then went away a little distance.

"That the parish churchyard, Sheffield, is in the centre of the town, surrounded by retail shops, offices, and respectable private dwellings; that graves are continually opened, from which offensive smells are emitted, especially in particular parts of the burial-ground; and at one corner resides a family who are so annoyed as to be under the necessity of keeping their windows constantly closed. I am myself often obliged to give orders for my windows to be shut when the grave digger is at work, and the wind from the south. On the south side the land is very wet, and frequently buckets of black water, of a most pernicious and unpleasant odour, are emptied at or near to the principal street of the town. It is not unusual to see old coffins, in which bodies appear to be in a state of decomposition, taken out of graves, and secreted in what is termed the bone-hole, until a funeral has taken place, in order to make room for another interment, where scarcely it is possible to deposit another body, so crowded are many and most of the graves. I frequently see human skulls and bones strewn about the graveyard in a most disgusting manner, and very often graves are opened only just deep enough to cover the coffins. I can only account for this, that either the parties were too poor to pay the full fee of interment or that the grave was full.

"That St Paul's churchyard is in a thickly-populated part of the town of Sheffield, and the land there is also very wet, and when graves are opened much annoyance is experienced by the inhabitants. In the summer, after a heavy shower of rain, the nuisance of the drains into public street channels is intolerable, so much so, that one of our most active and respectable magistrates has complained.

"That St George's churchyard is situated in one of the best parts of the town, but this graveyard is a complete nuisance to the tenants of the

respectable dwellings around it ; and I have often heard one of our most respectable medical practitioners complain of having to pass this, as one of the greatest nuisances to the public health in the town of Sheffield."

But why make a circuit of general grave delivery through every town in the United Kingdom ? The reader is perfectly safe in the conclusion that many other towns are in a similar condition to those to which we have adverted, and he may infer thence the sepulchral grievances of the country at large. We may, therefore, cut short our dismal tour of inspection, and proceed at once to consider the immediate and prospective *remedies* that have been discussed by the Committee.

The first class of remedies is merely mitigative and temporary, not interfering with vested rights, and so far easy, but running contrary to popular prejudice, pride, and human affections, and therefore very difficult of execution.

The first evil in the present system of treating the dead is, that the corpse is kept in the house of the family much too long. This fault extends through all classes, but to an excess amongst the poor.

Mr Robert Carr, of Duke's court, Bow street, London, an undertaker, who is ' thankful that he has lost the sense of smelling,' tells the Committee that the most deleterious odours are the consequence of this practice. " I am not sensible of what I inhale," he says ; " but I have had a very bad taste in the throat." We subjoin the continuation of the dialogue :—

" *Mr Ainsworth.* After you have been at one of the interments have you had an unpleasant taste in the throat ?—Yes, if the body happened to be very bad, which is too frequently the case among poor people. If a person dies, we will say on Wednesday, the following Sunday is the convenient day. The first Sunday is too soon for them ; they keep it till the Sunday following, when you can hardly go near the body, it is so bad."

" *Chairman.* Have your children been afflicted with illness ?—My little boy was ill some time ago, in consequence of a body that I had in the house : and it made me ill also.

" Why did you have a body in your house ?—A man died at the King's-college hospital, and I removed the body to my house, the people not having convenience to take it to their own home ; then it was not convenient for them to bury it in a reasonable time, and at last it became so offensive that we could hardly bear the place. The body was placed on a bench in the shop. My little boy works a little in his way, and this body was on his bench ; it was very much in his way ; he kept puddling about at his little bench, and I really believe that his illness was occasioned by that, in consequence of being myself so ill ; he was more about the coffin than I was.

" What was his disorder ?—He was taken ill very suddenly ; he breathed very quickly, and I supposed that he would not live long. I went to Mr Walker ; he came, and he said he was very bad, and if something was not done very quickly he would have a most severe illness, but he would do what he could.

"Did he cure him?—Yes, to my astonishment, and of every person who saw the child.

"I suppose that has been a lesson to you, never to have a dead body in your house again?—Yes; and if ever I should have another, if it is not buried within a reasonable time, I will go to the overseer and insist on its being done.

"*Chairman.* Now you, as an undertaker, have great opportunities of seeing the customs of the poor; have the kindness to state to the committee your opinion as to the custom they have of keeping bodies so long before interment?—In many instances persons say, 'We cannot bury under a week;' that is from custom. Others have not the means of getting a black gown, and they cannot follow in a coloured one; that is their bit of pride; then it is put off, it may be, two or three days on that account. They will not have their relatives buried by the parish; they would rather do anything than that, saying they wish them to be buried respectably; and then the end of it is, that myself, and other people like me, often bury for nothing, not intending to do it. They cheat us; and if they would do away with their little pride, and let the parish do it, the bodies would be removed in a reasonable time, and such men as myself would not be imposed on as we frequently are.

"*Mr Ainsworth.* Does any drinking go on?—It is generally a drunken job; it is too frequently so.

"*Chairman.* From what you have stated, as to this dead body being in your house, making you and your boy sick, your impression is that it is very injurious to the health of people keeping bodies in that way?—I am sure of it.

"And you attribute it to the two causes you have mentioned?—Yes, keeping bodies above ground too long; and it would be a very good thing if it could be altered, so that a body should be compelled to be buried within six days."

The following example is taken from Mr Walker's subsequent correspondence with the Committee:—

"In the month of June, in the year 1835, a woman died of typhus fever, in the upper part of the house, No. 17 White-horse yard, Drury lane. The body, which was buried on the fourth day, was brought down a narrow staircase. Lewis Swalthoy, shoemaker, then living with his family on the second floor of this house, and now residing at No. 5 Princes street, Drury lane, during the time the coffin was placed for a few minutes in a transverse position in the doorway of his room, in order that it might pass the more easily into the street, was sensible of a most disgusting odour which escaped from the coffin. He complained, almost immediately afterwards, of a peculiar coppery taste, which he described as being situated at the base of the tongue and posterior part of the throat; in a few hours afterwards he had, at irregular intervals, slight sensations of chilliness, which, before the next sunset, had merged into repeated shiverings of considerable intensity. That evening he was confined to his bed; he passed through a most severe form of typhus fever; at the expiration of the third week he was removed to the fever hospital, and recovered. He had been in excellent health up to the instant when he was exposed to this malaria."

The poor operatives dressed in black, whom the undertakers employ, suffer dreadfully from this custom when they attend a "walking funeral."

The Chairman to Mr Whittaker, the undertaker :—

“ What is the practice employed in walking funerals ?—There are men underneath ; the pall covers them, and they convey the body to the ground.

“ Is not that likely to be unhealthy to the men who convey the bodies ?—Yes ; I have been affected very much myself by a walking funeral before now.

“ Is not the gaseous matter that escapes from the coffin, being shut up under the pall, likely to affect the coffin-bearers ?—Yes, particularly the men at the shoulders ; they are closely covered by the pall, consequently they inhale more of it than the men at the feet.

“ Have you found that affect their health ?—It has affected mine.

“ *Colonel Fox.* In what way has your health been affected ; what have been the symptoms ?—I have lost my appetite, in the first place, with severe sickness ; I have not been able to follow my work. In some cases, where I endeavoured to get some gas at one time from one of the vaults, I was laid up then for a week, or nearly a fortnight, and was not able to follow my business.

“ Did you consult any medical man on that subject ?—I consulted Mr Walker.

“ Did the medical gentleman that attended you attribute your complaint to that occupation ?—Yes ; and I am certain it was that.

“ *Chairman.* According to your impression, is that gas exhaling also injurious to the houses in the vicinity of the graveyard ?—I should certainly think so.

“ You judge so from the effect which it has had on yourself ?—I do.”

The Rev. E. James comes forward with the following dreadful testimony :—

“ I was asked, on my former examination, whether I had experienced anything offensive issuing from the tombs in attending Stepney churchyard, in answer to which, I said, no. I beg to repeat that ; but though I say that, at the same time I have suffered dreadfully from effluvia issuing from bodies interred, where parties have kept their friends till they were in such a state of decomposition as literally to render it impossible for any person to approach near the coffin. I recollect on one occasion distinctly, where the corpse was brought into the church between the services on a Sunday, no language can describe the scene I witnessed ; the undertaker's men all covered over with that which ran from the coffin, and such a scene in the middle aisle of the church it was enough to poison a person, and I was obliged to send for chloride of lime to disaffect the church to enable persons to come to afternoon service, which they could not have done unless I had taken that precaution.

“ *Lord Mahon.* What period of time after death had the corpse to which you allude been kept ?—That I cannot answer ; but that, I presume, depends very much upon the state of the weather.

“ *Chairman.* It is your impression that it is very injurious to the living to keep bodies too long uninterred ?—Certainly.

“ What time do you think they should be allowed to be kept unburied ?—I should say generally five days.

“ *Lord Mahon.* In practice does it happen, except in very rare cases, that anybody is kept from burial longer than one week ?—In the summer time it very often happens.”

No wonder, then, it should be an observation amongst

undertakers that those who attend a funeral one Sunday are often brought to the same churchyard on the following Sunday as corpses! Even the protections of embalming within three coffins are not always sufficient. Mr Bunn, one of the gentlemen-at-arms, states in the 'Stage, before and behind the Curtain,' that while doing duty around the remains of his late Majesty, he could scarcely endure the odour that evaporated from the royal corpse.

This great preliminary evil can only be effectually checked by an Act of Parliament compelling the interment of a corpse within a period of from twenty-four hours to six days, according to the nature of the disease or accident that had produced death. It is as reasonable that Parliament should interfere on this point as that it should have done so in the enactment enjoining the burial of the dead in woollen, and commanding that the depth of a grave shall not be less than five feet. The grave diggers, however, seem to treat this latter law as a "dead letter." The new restriction could be easily carried into operation in towns by the addition of a medical supervising officer to the local division of police, and of course by the attaching heavy penalties to cases of non-compliance.

The next proposed improvement is in the fabric of the coffins;—the desideratum being not that they should be better, but that they should be *worse* than those now in use. Mr Walker says,—

"I think there is a great deal of unnecessary expense as to coffins. The French are wiser than we. They seldom pay more than five or seven francs for a coffin.* The public will perhaps think that they do a very clever thing in putting the body of their friend into a leaden coffin, but it is not the least protection. The elm is more durable when in the ground than deal; therefore it is desirable that deal should be substituted for elm. The coffin should be as light as possible. The cheap French coffin is made of the pine. It is exceedingly similar to an orange chest, in the form of a roof to the top. The city mark is placed on it."

This intelligent witness adds, that a body placed in an ordinary coffin will be decomposed in seven years. The inference is that in the lighter proposed deal coffin decomposition would be much quicker. An elm coffin placed in moist ground will last for a great number of years. Dr Navier, a French physician, states that upon examining three bodies, one at seven, another at eleven, and another at twenty years after interment, he found them all in a state of active putrefaction. In dry, well-ventilated vaults, as in St Patrick's, Dublin, and the cathe-

* Mr Harker, undertaker, of St Stephen's, Coleman street, states the cheapest coffin, made for a grown person, to cost about 14s.; that is for elm, but a slight deal coffin could be made for 9s. or 10s.

dral at Vienna, bodies become mummies, and endure longer than any coffin.

As long as we must have burials near a dense population, and in grounds over-occupied, it is admitted that the introduction of every method that can accelerate decomposition will be a public advantage. Next to the light coffins comes the consideration of quick lime as an agent of dissolution. The committee frequently advert to the Neapolitan plan, and ask whether a modification of it would be practicable here? The practice referred to is one of the wonders of Naples, and is carried on at the Campo Santo, which is situated outside the city, looking towards Mount Vesuvius, and is used exclusively for the burial of the poor. A low wall encloses a quadrangular area, which contains three hundred and sixty-five deep pits, one for every day in the year, each covered with a slab, to the centre of which is fastened a massive iron ring. When the anniversary of one of these holes arrives the slab is removed; in the evening come one or two carts laden with the bodies of the poor. They are brought without clothes or coffin, or distinction of sex, but thrown and pressed over each other with infinitely less care than a farmer would bestow on the carriage of half-a-dozen dead pigs to market. Two or three athletic brutes, almost naked too, are engaged in pulling the corpses out of the cart. Each assistant sets the body on his shoulder, or sometimes astride on both his shoulders, according to its weight and size, and then, trotting to the mouth of the pit, bends his neck, and allows the burthen to fall over, exactly as a porter at the wharfs dispatches a sack of grain. When the last of the dead is flung in, an immense quantity of quick lime is thrown over the bodies. The dark cavern is then closed up, and, when it is again opened that day twelvemonth, nothing is seen but a heap of bones at the bottom!

Mr Walker says, "I do not think the public would submit to that; I think the old Roman plan of burning would be preferable." Unquestionably. But as to the practicability of a modification of the plan, there is considerable difference of opinion amongst the witnesses. Colonel Fox asks—

"Might not that objection be obviated by doing it in a more decent manner than it is done at Naples?—Mr Walker: I think it might; the English are a very sensible people, and they might be brought to anything reasonable."

Dr Copeland thinks the opposition to the introduction of quick lime into and about coffins would not be material; the practice would be beneficial. But Dr Bowring doubts this:—

"In Portugal, where, generally speaking, quick lime is used for the purpose of destroying the corpses of the dead, I recollect some of the churchyards in the city were exceedingly offensive."

If lime be laid on the exterior of the coffin the effect on the corpse will be little or nothing; but quick lime neutralizes the carbonic acid gas: for the purpose of neutralizing other gases the chloride of lime is best. The fact is, quick lime is already used in most, if not all, of the metropolitan graveyards. Mr Whittaker says it is merely strewed or intermixed with the ground, or the sides of the coffin are taken out and the lime is strewn over the body. We have had repeated evidence that it has been in abundant use in Enon chapel. Quick lime, as an accelerative, is too slow, and, as a neutralizer, a mere palliative when brought to act upon the immense amount of mortality which our grounds and vaults contain.

The next immediate partial remedy suggested is, that the bodies should be buried side by side, and not one over the other, as is the present practice. Mr Walker observes:—

“I have examined upwards of ninety graveyards, and am decidedly of opinion that coffins should be placed side by side, even as a matter of economy, and not as they are in Barbican and other places, where they have twenty or twenty-five bodies in one grave. We have had the old graveyard of St Clement’s turned up within these few days, and given to the street; this was necessary, for the purpose of a sewer; the stench was abominable, though it is forty years since that was used as a graveyard; if that place had been opened in the summer, it might have produced an epidemic.

“Suppose a case,” he continues, “where it is necessary to exhume a body for judicial purposes, as happened at Chelsea in 1840. A poor man died in a wretched hovel in Paradise row, Chelsea, and was buried in the usual way by the parish. A judicial inquiry was instituted, and it was necessary to exhume the body. The grave digger opened the hole, and after searching for some time, he declared his inability to find it. The coroner (Mr Wakley) inquired of the summoning officer the precise number of bodies interred in the same pit? The officer replied, to the best of his recollection there were twenty-six bodies. The coroner wished to be informed if they *rammed them in with a rammer*? The officer said he was not aware that they resorted to such a process, but the bodies of paupers were packed together as closely as possible, in order to make the most of the space. The coroner observed that such a system of burial was revolting to humanity, and reflected the highest disgrace on a Christian country.

“With regard to the burials of the poor, it will be difficult to say how they should be provided for; but if we go upon the old system of putting eighteen or twenty bodies in a grave, we shall leave a source of disease which may be acting for a long period. In Paris they have an excellent mode for the interment of the poor. The ‘*fosses communes*’ of a cemetery was dug to a depth of four feet, the earth being thrown up on either side by the fosse for a considerable distance. The bodies are deposited side by side, but not one upon the other. The mortality of the day being received, the earth is thrown on the coffins thus deposited until the fosse is filled, when another place is dug and occupied in the same manner. This ground, as required, may with safety be again employed for burial after a period of five or seven years.”

But, admitting Mr Walker’s theory of the economy of space

to be true, it will not be carried into practice in the metropolitan graveyards or in those of country towns. The crowded, or rather crammed state of the grounds, the urgent demands of our present mortality, and the vested rights of the grave diggers, will continue the deep pits.

It cannot be denied that the institution of suburban cemeteries has, in some slight degree, checked the practices of which we complain; but their benefit is hardly sensible—in fact, the inadequacy of what they have done, or can do, only demonstrates the enormous extent and inveteracy of the present means of burial, and the necessity of the Legislature stepping in as the only power able to afford us general relief and protection. Most of the cemeteries established out of town are joint-stock speculations, and we do not see why we should speak more harshly of this kind of scrip than of any other; we must give them credit for every advantage they offer, and then remember that the shareholders are as anxious for the public accommodation, and their own, as are the “honourable proprietors” of any railway or steam-packet company, or, in short, of any other undertaking. The Highgate cemetery is beautifully situated; but Sydney Smith says we use for our tea the water that percolates through it. Mr Walker observes, that the Kensal-green cemetery is flanked by a canal, “and here they follow the very objectionable practice of placing several bodies in one grave.” The Rev. Mr Knapp fears that some of the cemeteries will soon be too near London, as they are already beginning to be built round. The situation of the Norwood cemetery seems amongst the best; but we are not sure whether it is consecrated. Mr Walker thinks cemeteries ought not to be nearer than two miles to town; Dr Knapp thinks five miles; but a preference should be given to an elevated situation, as there the gases would pass off with the currents of air.

It being admitted then, on all hands, that burials in towns should cease, that cemeteries should be established outside towns, and that Government ought to take the question into its own hands, we have now to proceed to consider how this is to be done.

The Bishop of London thus addresses himself to the difficulties of the case:—

“Feeling, in common with other persons, the necessity of applying some remedy for the evil complained of, I am at the same time interested in the subject for another reason; looking to the interest of the parochial clergy of my own diocese and of others, but especially of my own, as being involved in the question. I am sure that the clergy, generally speaking, would be willing to make some sacrifice for the sake of effecting so great an improvement as is contemplated; but you cannot expect men, the principal part of whose subsistence in some cases depends upon the fees

arising from a practice that has hitherto not been complained of, willingly to give up the whole source of that income without some compensation. In some of the parishes, as I will shortly prove by instances, a considerable proportion of the incumbent's income arises from burial fees; and whatever measure is adopted with a view to remove the interment of corpses from cities and crowded towns, to cemeteries placed in the neighbourhood, it will scarcely be possible to prevent considerable loss to the clergy; because, even if you can secure to them the fees to which they are now entitled by law, for every corpse which is carried out of their parish to be buried in a cemetery, they will mostly lose the complimentary fees, and what are called 'the fittings,' that is to say, scarves and hat-bands, which in some parishes amount to a very considerable sum annually; these are only given, of course, where the clergyman attends in person, and unless he himself performs the ceremony in person he cannot expect to receive what are called the complimentary fees. All I can say with reference to that part of the subject is, that I hope that in any legislative measure, some care will be taken to diminish the loss to the clergy, as far as consistent with the public interest; and that such a thing may be done, though I am afraid not without some difficulty. In the first cemetery established in the neighbourhood of London, that of Kensal green, when the whole question was new, and the effects of the cemetery could hardly be calculated, a fee was reserved, I forget the amount,* upon each funeral coming from certain parishes, to the incumbents of those parishes, which, however, proved to be an utterly inadequate compensation, and the incumbent of Paddington, whose income arises principally from fees and Easter offerings, informs me, that in consequence of the opening of that cemetery he considers himself to have lost at least 200*l.* a-year; that from one parish; and the loss to the rector of St Marylebone, I am sure, cannot be less. The next cemetery opened was that at Highgate. That bill was passed at a time when I was prevented by severe illness from attending to public business; and by the Act which was passed, a small fee was secured to the clergymen, and there again they are great losers. The third cemetery near London was that of the West London and Westminster Cemetery. In that case the company are obliged by law to pay a fee of 10*s.* for every funeral to the clergyman from whose parish it comes. That sum was considered by the clergymen, whom I consulted upon that occasion, as being a fair compensation, taking an average, for the losses they were likely to sustain. I may here remark, with respect to that mode of compensating the clergy, that it makes it necessary for them from time to time to go round to the different cemetery offices to look over the books, and to see what funerals have been brought from their respective parishes, to calculate the amount, and then to demand it of the officers of the company, which is not a very agreeable, nor, at times, a very easy task for the clergyman to perform; and, upon the whole, I fear that it will not be possible to secure the interest of the clergy effectually, but still it may be done to a considerable extent. While I am on the subject of cemeteries, I would remark, that a provision ought to be made (and this will be one of the difficulties of the case) for the funerals of the poor; as it is, they are much too expensive for poor people, and if they are obliged to carry the bodies of their friends to a distance in the country, in the present mode, it will become more so. There is, however, no expense so little thought of by the poor as the expense of a funeral. I have known repeated instances where they would deprive themselves of

* Dr Knapp says it is 5*s.* for a vault funeral, and 18*d.* for a common grave funeral.

the necessaries of life for the sake of paying respect to the bodies of their departed friends; and I should be sorry that that feeling should be interfered with beyond a certain extent. I think, by means of a cheap and decent kind of conveyance, of a hearse, that the expense of a funeral may be reduced, and if the poor do not object to avail themselves of it, that it may be done as cheap as their funerals are performed at present, if they are willing to dispense with what is called 'a walking funeral.' I think that it is wholly impossible to pass any law, the provisions of which (unless there be a latitude of application provided) shall be applicable to all parts of populous towns in the kingdom; what may be a very wise provision for the metropolis, or for any given populous town, may be found not to be applicable to another town with an amount of population nearly as great. I would take the liberty of mentioning one instance, that of my native town, Bury St Edmunds, where there is but one churchyard for the whole of the town, containing about 11,000 inhabitants; and if you were to go merely by the rule of population, you would say that no funeral should take place in the town; but then that churchyard is very large; it is open on one side to the country, and will serve the purposes of the town for many years to come, without the slightest chance of detriment to the health of the inhabitants; therefore I think it must be left to the local authorities, acting upon certain principles, and under certain regulations laid down by law, to determine in what cases funerals shall be prohibited, and what provision shall be made for the interment of the dead. I do not think anything else occurs to me at the present moment, which I think it necessary to state, unless the committee should like to hear the amount of burial fees in some of the parishes of London for the last three years."

The following list of burial fees was then handed in:—

	1838.			1839.			1840.		
	£.	s.	d.	£.	s.	d.	£.	s.	d.
St James, Westminster - - -	329	0	0	298	0	0	246	0	0*
St Botolph, Bishopsgate - - -	36	1	2	42	7	2	23	9	10
St George the Martyr - - -	70	12	6	59	5	10	59	0	8
St John, Westminster - - -	123	7	0	93	19	8	105	13	7
St George in the East - - -	101	15	0	101	8	6	74	8	6
St Bride - - -	51	6	8	51	2	0	81	2	4
St Margaret, Westminster - - -	160	14	0	115	1	6	128	0	8
St Giles in the Fields - - -	764	16	6	608	19	6	635	13	0
St Dunstan, Westminster - - -	39	9	2	24	0	8	35	5	10
St Clement Danes - - -	121	14	9	112	19	10	86	3	4
Bethnal Green - - -	71	4	0	67	4	0	62	3	6
St George, Bloomsbury - - -	273	7	6	159	4	6	235	2	0
St Botolph, Aldersgate - - -	60	8	4	58	2	8	45	10	0
St George, Hanover square - - -	597	17	0	423	8	2	488	11	2
St Giles, Cripplegate - - -	87	9	6	66	6	10	56	14	10
St Sepulchre - - -	80	16	6	66	8	0	72	6	0
St Andrew, Holborn - - -	306	0	1	324	14	1	223	15	2
St Catherine Cree - - -	75	3	6	43	16	6	56	13	6
St Olave, Hart street - - -	60	8	0	37	4	0	32	2	0
Allhallows, Barking - - -	31	19	6	7	19	0	15	16	6
Paddington - - -	494	14	0	404	13	0	425	4	0
Kensington - - -	216	13	6	154	9	4	254	13	6
St Marylebone - - -	589	17	6	548	15	4	516	11	0

* In the six preceding years the yearly average was 405l.

The decrease is attributed to the establishment of the cemeteries in the suburbs. The establishment of general cemeteries in the country would deprive the clergy of all these fees, and also of fees upon monuments, grave-stones, and tablets.

His lordship would have no objection to a part of a public cemetery being left unconsecrated, for the accommodation of those who do not belong to the Church of England: but the clergy should get no fees from the latter. If the act for the abolition of burials in towns were passed, he would be for preserving the rights of family vaults, within strict limitations, under the churches; but he would not permit the opening of new vaults. He would extend the same principle to some family graves in churchyards, provided always that there should be a sufficient number of feet (four or five) over the uppermost coffin. He also hopes that the case of the parish clerks of London, a respectable body of men, will be taken into consideration, before they are deprived of their fees. The sextons and grave-diggers he would leave to shift for themselves.

Mr Knapp thinks that in large parishes a penny rate would cover all the expenses connected with the new cemeteries, including the fees to the clergy. But in every place it is assumed that the clergy would willingly accept a moderate compensation for their precarious fees. The expense of the decent burial of a pauper in town is about 2*l.*; but if several bodies were carried to the cemetery in one hearse, as has been the case at St Giles's, though the bishop objects to it, the expense to the parish would be much less. Whether we refer to the "noisy declamations of the Radicals," as at Southampton, or to the factious opposition of certain Dissenters, as at Leeds, it will be seen that the local feelings of the dispassionate and enlightened inhabitants cannot act until they are protected by a general statute.

How discreditable to this country is the difference between the English and the Egyptian fashion of legislating on this subject! We find the following interesting narrative in the evidence of Colonel Patrick Campbell, late British consul-general at Alexandria:—

"I was resident at Alexandria at the time the different burial-places were removed out of the town. For each religion there was a separate burial-place; a Protestant burying-place, a Roman Catholic burying-place, a Greek Church burying-place, a Jewish burying-place, a Mohammedan burying-place, and an Armenian burying-place; in fact, every sect in the country had a burying-place within the walls of Alexandria; and indeed the Turks had several burial-places, which were easily known by the marble tombs; they generally put up a different kind of turban, according to the position of the person buried. And in the year 1835, after the severe plague, or towards the early part of 1836, I was talking to Mahomet Ali one day about it; he asked, whether any means could be adopted to remove the burial-places; whether I thought it would be advantageous? At

that time the Roman Catholic burying-ground was completely burthened with dead inside the walls of the town, exceedingly offensive. I told the Pacha I thought there was plenty of space out of the town, one or two miles from the town, and that it would be easily arranged with the consent of the heads of the different religions, to remove the burying-places, or prevent further burials going on in Alexandria; and immediately he sent the chief of police to me. I was at that time president of what was called the Board of Ornament, which Mahomet Ali begged me to take charge of, for the improvement of the streets. Some of the streets were very narrow—very many buildings irregularly placed. I was perpetual resident. Mr Thurburn, who was British consul at Alexandria; Mr Harris, the principal British merchant; and the Greek consul-general, and another consul-general; the Turkish head of police; the Turkish president of the Tribunal of Commerce, and the Turkish military engineer. There was the chief civil engineer, an Italian; and we took everything of that kind into our own hands. The Pacha sent the chief of police to me; I told him to take the civil engineer, who was paid by the Pacha for attending on the board, and go to the chiefs of the different religions, and arrange with them about having their burials out of the town. The Turkish burying-ground was taken to Pompey's Pillar, and the others towards the Rosetta gate, about a mile off the road, and a mile and a half or two miles out of the town: each company fixed on their own burying-ground, and the ground was given up to them, and since that no bodies have been interred within the walls of Alexandria; and many of the numerous Turkish burying-places have been lately built on, so that the town has been very much improved."

As plans and suggestions innumerable will be brought forward respecting the kind and modification of cemetery that would best promote the object, it would not be fair here to pass by in silence the project of Mr Wilson in 1830. He objected altogether to the principle of burying the dead within the surface of the earth, as, upon this plan, if suitable accommodation were provided for every corpse, the result must be the usurpation of large and valuable tracts of land, which would be better occupied by tillage or the recreations of the community. This objection particularly applied to the case of London. Instead of a superficial-burying place, he therefore proposed a pyramid cemetery:—

"A metropolitan cemetery on a scale commensurate with the necessities of the largest city in the world, embracing prospectively the demands of centuries, sufficiently capacious to receive FIVE MILLIONS OF THE DEAD, where they may repose in perfect security, without interfering with the comfort, the health, the business, or the pursuits of the living."

This stupendous structure would occupy eighteen acres, but was intended to afford accommodation equal to one thousand acres of churchyard. The great pyramid of Gizah would be no longer one of the wonders of the world, as Mr Wilson's would far surpass its magnitude. The design of this Babylonian work covered a base as large as the area of Russell square, and towered twice as high as St Paul's cross; four cyclopean flights

of stairs ascending from the pavement to the pinnacle. The whole mass was to be faced with square blocks of granite, and surmounted by a plain characteristic obelisk, having a circular stone staircase, and terminating in an astronomical observatory. The inclosure surrounding the pyramid would contain several acres beyond its base, which might be tastefully laid out for the reception of cenotaphs and monuments. Next there were to be within the walls a small plain chapel and a register office; also four neat dwellings for the keeper, the clerk, the sexton, and the superintendent. There were to be four terrace-walks along the four walls, each angle crowned with a watch-tower. The approach would be through a lofty Egyptian portal.

The estimate of the expense was *two millions and a half*;—a startling sum in the days when the cost of the London and Birmingham railway was unknown; but assuming the annual number of interments to be 30,000, and the accommodation for each to be 5*l.*, the income of the pyramid would be 150,000*l.*, or fifteen millions in one hundred years!—thus saving not less than 12,500,000*l.* of the public money in the short space of a century—and what signifies a century in the progress of a work designed for eternal duration, or for a period as long as the earth shall endure! However, the pyramid cemetery, instead of rearing its gloomy mountain-side into the clouds, and casting the shadow of death over every part of London in succession in the course of the day, exists only upon paper: the dividends were too remote, and joint-stock people would not wait one hundred years for one hundred per cent; though doubtless some of those gentlemen have since invested their money in Spanish scrip and in the stocks of the New World, to see a return of interest or principal from which they will have to live at least a thousand years.

The impression made upon the Parliamentary Committee is contained in the resolutions added to their Report. Having recognised the necessity of protecting the rights of the parochial clergy, whose chief source of income is in some cases derived from fees received from interments, the Committee inform the House that they have resolved:—

“1. That the practice of interment within the precincts of large towns is injurious to the inhabitants thereof, and frequently offensive to public decency.

“2. That in order to prevent or diminish the evil of this practice, it is expedient to pass an Act of Parliament.

“3. That legislation upon the subject be, in the first instance, confined to the metropolis, and to certain other towns or places the population of which respectively at the last census exceeded 50,000.

“4. That burials be absolutely prohibited, after a certain date, within the limits of such towns or places, except in the case of family vaults

already existing, the same partaking of the nature of private property, and being of limited extent.

"5. That certain exceptions, as applying to eminent public characters, be likewise admitted with regard to Westminster Abbey and to St Paul's.

"6. That certain exceptions be likewise admitted with regard to some cemeteries of recent construction, according to special local circumstances, to be hereafter determined.

"7. That within the dates which may be specified the parochial authorities in such towns or places be empowered and required to impose a rate for the purpose of forming cemeteries at a certain distance from the same.

"8. That a power be given to the parochial authorities of two or more parishes or townships of the same town to combine, if they think proper, for the same cemetery.

"9. That a *minimum* of distance be fixed for such cemeteries, from the motive that leads to their establishment—the public health; and that the *maximum* of distance be likewise fixed, so as to secure the lower classes, as far as possible, from the hardship of loss of time, or weariness in proceeding to a great distance to attend the funerals of their relatives.

"10. That the parochial authorities be responsible for the due and decent administration of each burial within the new cemeteries, in the same manner as they now are within the present churchyards; and that, on the other hand, they be entitled to the same amount of fees on each burial as they at present receive.

"11. That due provision be made for the perpetual possession by the parishes or townships of the ground on which the cemeteries shall be made.

"12. That due space be reserved, without consecration, and within the limits of the intended cemeteries, for the separate burials of such persons or classes of persons as may be desirous of such separation.

"13. That no fees from any such burials in unconsecrated ground be payable to any ministers of the Church of England.

"14. That, subject to the conditions expressed in the tenth and thirteenth resolutions, arrangements be made to equalise as far as possible the total amount of fees payable on burials within the same cemetery, whether in the consecrated or the unconsecrated ground.

"15. That considering the difficulty of fixing the same date for the prohibition of burials within the limits of different towns, or the same distance for the construction of the new cemeteries, and the importance of having reference to various local circumstances, it does not appear desirable to observe in all cases an uniform rule in these respects, but that the time and manner of applying the principles set forth in the foregoing resolutions should be entrusted either to some department of the Government, or to a board of superintendence, to be constituted by the Act of Parliament.

"16. That the duty of framing and introducing a bill on the principles set forth in the foregoing resolutions, would be most efficiently discharged by her Majesty's Government, and that it is earnestly recommended to them by the Committee."

Here we may appropriately conclude our paper. The facts and opinions which we have collected show the true state of our burial grounds, and demonstrate the necessity of a change for the sake of health, decency, and convenience. The members of the committee are entitled to the gratitude of society for the diligence and fortitude with which they performed their repelling task. Through their valuable labours we may trust

soon to arrive at the time when the living shall be no longer scandalized, and the dead may rest in peace. J.

[We were glad to learn that a further inquiry upon this subject had been set on foot by Government, for we do not entirely concur in the recommendations of the Committee, and think several of their resolutions require re-consideration. The proposition, for example, to allow every parish in London to form its own cemetery, would lead to many practical inconveniences, as nothing can be more defective for such an object than our existing parochial organization. We should lament to see London surrounded by a multitude of petty and ill-managed cemeteries, which would, in fact, be nothing more than the old churchyards removed to a greater distance. What every one would desire is a general cemetery, or perhaps at most three general cemeteries, conveniently situated in regard to access, where the best possible arrangements for interments might be attainable with the greatest economy of expenditure. Cemeteries have now been long established on the Continent, and it would be well if some pains were taken to profit by the experience of our neighbours, instead of hastening perhaps to commit the mistakes they now wish had been avoided. At the present moment the management of the cemeteries of Paris is about to undergo a thorough reform, and in some respects the system will be entirely changed. The report alluded to by the Home Secretary probably contains some information on this subject, and, since the above was written, Sir James Graham has announced his intention to present it to the House; probably about the close of the Session.—ED.]

ART. X.—*North American Review*, No. 119, for April 1843.
Wiley and Putnam.

OUR number for February contained an article on the 'Treaty of Washington concluded by Lord Ashburton,' but the attention of the public was diverted from the merits of the question by a postscript to a pamphlet of Mr Featherstonhaugh, which appeared about the same time, in which it was stated that a map had been discovered by Mr Sparks, in Paris, supposed to have been the one alluded to by Franklin, in which he had marked with "a strong red line" the limits of the United States, "as settled in the preliminaries between the British plenipotentiaries."

